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SUBJECT: A/S CAMPBELL, GOJ OFFICIALS DISCUSS PM HATOYAMA'S COMMENTS ON U.S./CHINA/SOUTH KOREA

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission James P. Zumwalt; Reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

¶1. (S) Summary: EAP A/S Kurt Campbell underscored in his October 11-12 meetings with senior-level Japanese officials the U.S. Government's concern regarding Prime Minister Hatoyama's remarks during the October 10 Japan-China-ROK Summit in Beijing on U.S.-Japan relations. He strongly urged Japanese leaders not to seek to improve relations with other governments at the expense of the United States. He pointed out that public comments by U.S. officials that the U.S. Government ought to focus on China at the expense of Japan would lead to a crisis in bilateral relations.

¶2. (S) Parliamentary Vice-Minister Akihisa Nagashima assured A/S Campbell that Hatoyama did not mean to imply that Japan would seek to improve relations with China and South Korea at the expense of the United States. Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) Director General for Asia and Oceanic Affairs Akitaka Saiki noted MOFA's surprise at Hatoyama's comments, adding that the new Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) Government was still in the process of organizing itself in the foreign policy realm. A/S Campbell pointed out to Saiki that the U.S. Government was also concerned about Foreign Minister Okada's recent remarks indicating the exclusion of the United States from a new East Asian regional architecture. Saiki, acknowledging Okada's "stubbornness" on the issue, highlighted that MOFA officials deemed it "unthinkable" to exclude the United States. He asserted, however, that only China benefited if the United States and Japan were to debate membership in the East Asia Community (EAC) and that China would never allow for Japan to take the lead in creating the regional architecture. All Japanese interlocutors stressed to A/S Campbell the primacy of Japan's relations with the United States. In earlier meetings on October 11 with A/S Campbell, former Japanese Cabinet advisor Yukio Okamoto and MOFA Director General for North American Affairs Kazuyoshi Umemoto highlighted Hatoyama's personality shortcomings as a possible source for the problematic comments and urged that A/S Campbell raise the U.S. Government's concerns at higher levels. End Summary.

USG Concern at Hatoyama's Comments

¶3. (C) During October 11-12 discussions with senior-level Japanese officials, visiting EAP A/S Campbell repeatedly noted the U.S. Government's concern regarding public remarks by Prime Minister Hatoyama at the October 10 Japan-China-South Korea Summit in Beijing, in which he stated that Japan had focused excessively on its relations with the United States, as opposed to Asia. A/S Campbell observed that the U.S. Government supported the new Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) Government in efforts to build a strong relationship with South Korea and China. He cautioned, however, that Prime Minister Hatoyama's comments in Beijing drew surprise from the highest levels of the U.S. Government.

"Imagine the Japanese response if the U.S. Government were to say publicly that it wished to devote more attention to China than Japan," A/S Campbell asked his interlocutors hypothetically. Such remarks would create a crisis in U.S.-Japan relations, from which recovery would be difficult, he explained. He continued that the United States would continue to underscore its commitment to robust relations with Japan and would refrain from commenting publicly on Hatoyama's remarks. He nevertheless urged that Japanese leaders avoid phrasing their desire for better Chinese and South Korean relations at the expense of the United States.

Vice-Minister Nagashima: Misinterpretation

¶4. (C) In his October 12 meeting with A/S Campbell, Ministry of Defense (MOD) Parliamentary Vice-Minister Akihisa Nagashima said the Prime Minister did not mean to imply that

Japan should put more emphasis on China and South Korea than on the United States. Rather, Hatoyama solely intended to signal his intent to strengthen the Japan-China-South Korea trilateral relationship as an initiative going forward. Nagashima added that he wished to reassure U.S. officials that Japan did not aim to build East Asian relations at the expense of the United States.

¶5. (C) A/S Campbell expressed appreciation for Nagashima's assurances and noted that the Japanese government could take steps to demonstrate the closeness of U.S.-Japan relations. One "wonderful gesture" would be for the DPJ Government to invite to Japan U.S. veterans who had been involved in the World War II campaigns in Corregidor and Bataan. A decision by the Japanese government to welcome these veterans, most of whom were in their 70s and 80s, would have great significance in the United States and would demonstrate how far the two countries had come since the war, explained A/S Campbell.

DG Saiki: MOFA Surprised

¶6. (C) MOFA Director General for Asia and Oceanic Affairs Akitaka Saiki stressed that the Prime Minister's comments in front of the press had surprised MOFA, which believed that it was inappropriate to characterize Japan as excessively dependent on the United States. He explained to A/S Campbell that the DPJ Government was still in the process of organizing itself as to "who spoke on which issues." Saiki continued that U.S.-Japan relations remained central and that the Japanese government did not intend to emphasize Asia at the expense of the Alliance.

¶7. (S) In his meeting with Saiki, A/S Campbell also cited U.S. concern at Foreign Minister Okada's recent remarks suggesting the exclusion of the United States from a new East Asian architecture. Saiki acknowledged that Foreign Minister Okada had been obstinate about not including the United States in such proposals. He offered his view as a MOFA bureaucrat, however, that "it was unthinkable to exclude the United States," adding that the participants to the trilateral summit had not discussed proposals for an East Asia Community in any detail. Okada, Saiki pointed out, was "only thinking five to ten years in the future about contiguous countries" when propounding EAC ideas. Hatoyama,

for his part, aspired mainly to form a core of countries in East Asia with shared values. If the United States and Japan, however, were to debate EAC membership, only China would benefit, Saiki asserted. China, moreover, would never allow Japan to take the lead in creating an East Asian architecture. He recounted that when Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao had expressed interest in pursuing the EAC proposal through the ASEAN Plus 3 process, Hatoyama had countered that the ""3 Plus ASEAN"" would be a way for Northeast Asia to take the lead. Wen did not reply, noted Saiki.

State Secretary Takemasa: Japan a Sovereign Nation

¶18. (C) Later on October 12, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) State Secretary Koichi Takemasa responded to A/S Campbell's points by noting that U.S.-Japan relations remained the basis of Japanese security policy. Takemasa observed that Hatoyama's comments were ""mere lip service"" to China, as the Prime Minister regards Japan's relations with the United States as ""primary." He added, however, that Japan ""had pride as a sovereign nation"" and recognized that it must improve relations with China.

Okamoto and DG Umemoto: Hatoyama's Personality

¶19. (S) In an October 11 discussion with A/S Campbell, former Japanese Cabinet advisor Yukio Okamoto said that the comments on China and South Korea showed that the Prime Minister was

weak when speaking with strong-willed individuals. Okamoto added that the Prime Minister usually voiced his opinion based on the last strong comments he had heard. In a similar vein, MOFA DG for North America Kaoru Umemoto told A/S Campbell over lunch on October 12 that Prime Minister Hatoyama had ""the habit of telling people what they wished to hear." He also confirmed that Hatoyama's remarks in Beijing had not been planned, and he recommended that A/S Campbell raise the U.S. Government's concern at higher levels.

¶10. (U) A/S Campbell has cleared this message.

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